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(54) Title: METHOD/APPARATUS FOR ENABLING PURCHASERS TO OBTAIN RETURN INFORMATION TO RETURN PRODUCTS VIA ON LINE TRANSACTIONS

(57) Abstract: An electronic registration system facilitates authorized product returns and reduces the incidence of improper returns. A retailer sales associate is prompted to enter individual product identification information such as an individual serial number. This individual product identification information is then stored in a data base along with the date on which the product was sold and an appropriate UPC code, SKU number or manufacturer code. A check digit algorithm may be used to verify the serial number prior to storage. A sales receipt may be imprinted with at least the date of the transaction and the serial number. When a product is returned, the retailer may cross-reference the serial number on the product with that on the receipt to verify the sales receipt. Otherwise, the database may be searched for pertinent sales information. A customer may also access a return authorization engine via the Internet to obtain return approval, an authorization number, return instructions, etc. to reduce retailer hassle.

## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No. PCT/US01/14694
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## A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) : G06P 15/3'00

US CL : 705/28

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

## B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 705/28. 26

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

US patent database text search on EAST  
Non patent literature search on DIALOG

## C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 5,984,508 A (HURLEY) 16 NOVEMBER 1999 SEE ABSTRACT AND FIGS. 2 AND 3	1-18
X	US 5,968,110 A (WESTROPE ET AL.) 19 OCTOBER 1999 SEE FIGS. 7 AND 8	1-18
A,E	US 6,269,344 B1 (JUNGER) 31 JULY 2001 SEE FIG. 3	1-18
A,P	US 6,085,172 A (JUNGER) 04 JULY 2000 SEE FIG. 3	1-18
A,P	US 6,154,738 A (CALL) 28 NOVEMBER 2000 SEE FIGS. 1 AND 7	1-18

Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.  See patent family annex.

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"A"	"X"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
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"P"	"A"	document member of the same patent family

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